

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A method of providing product information over a network comprising:

associating product codes with the values of a characteristic,

associating product codes with destinations on the network such that a first product code is associated with a first destination and a second product code is associated with a different second destination, the first product code and second product code further being associated with different characteristics of the same product,

storing the product codes, values, destinations and associations,

receiving a first request over the network, the request including the first product code and identifying a destination, and

sending the value associated with the first product code to the destination if the stored association indicates that the destination identified in the request is associated with the first product code.

2. The method of claim 1 wherein said step of associating product codes with destinations on the network includes associating an identifier of a destination with the network address of the destination, and wherein the step of sending the value to the destination includes sending the value to the network address of the destination.

3. The method of claim 2 wherein the request is sent from an address on the network different from the address to which the value is sent.

4. The method of claim 1 wherein the second product code is also associated with the first destination,

the request identifies the first destination and also includes the second product code, and

the value associated with the second product code is sent to the first destination with the value associated with the first product code.

5. The method of claim 1 wherein the value is sent in tagged format.

6. The method of claim 5 wherein the tagged format is XML.

7. The method of claim 1 wherein the characteristic is the product's appearance and the value is a picture of the product.

8. The method of claim 1 wherein the characteristic is a description of a feature of the product and the value is a string.

9. The method of claim 1 wherein the characteristic is the current price of the product and the value is a number.

10. A method of providing information from a second computer in a network comprising:

receiving a request for information about the product from a first computer on the network,

in response to the request, sending an information code and information relating to the first computer to a third computer on the network, the information code being associated with a characteristic of a product,

receiving, in response to the sending of the information code, a value of the characteristic associated with the information code, and

sending the value to the first computer.

11. The method of claim 10 wherein the value is customized based on the information relating to the first computer which was sent to the third computer.

12. The method of claim 11 wherein the value is also customized based on information relating to the first computer which was not sent with the information code.

13. The method of claim 12 wherein the information relating to the first computer which was not sent with the information code comprises demographic information.

14. The method of claim 12 wherein the information relating to the first computer which was not sent with the information code comprises prior purchase information.

15. The method of claim 10 wherein the information relating to the first computer relates to the user of the first computer.

16. The method of claim 12 wherein the information relating to the user is the user's Internet address.

17. The method of claim 10 further comprising said second computer sending information to said third computer indicating whether the user of the first computer purchased the product.

18. The method of claim 10 further including retrieving additional information in response to the request and sending the additional information with the value to the first computer.

19. The method of claim 18 further including:

identifying a template in response to the request for information, the template identifying the product code and additional information,

creating a document based on the template and including the value,

sending the value to the first computer by sending the document.

20. The method of claim 18 wherein the additional information includes information relating to the formatting of the document.

21. The method of claim 18 wherein the additional information relates to an entity other than the entity maintaining the value of the characteristic.

22. The method of claim 18 wherein the additional information relates to the product and is provided by an entity

other than the entity maintaining the value of the characteristic.

23. The method of claim 10 wherein the request for information originates with a user, the value is determined by a supplier of the product, and the information sent from the second computer is maintained by a vendor whereby the vendor buys the product from the supplier and sells the product to the user.

24. The method of claim 10 wherein the network is the Internet.

25. The method of claim 24 wherein the request for information about the product from a first computer is a URL of a web page associated with the product.

26. A method of providing product information over a network comprising:

associating product codes with the values of a characteristic,

associating product codes with destinations on the network such that a first product code is associated with a first destination and a second product code is associated with a different second destination, the first product code and second product code further being associated with different characteristics of the same product,

storing the product codes, values, destinations and associations,

receiving a first request over the network, the request including the first product code and identifying a destination,

sending the value associated with the first product code to the destination if the stored association indicates that the destination identified in the request is associated with the first product code, and

sending formatting information with the value.

27. A method of providing product information over a network comprising:

associating product codes with the values of a characteristic,

associating product codes with destinations on the network,

storing the product codes, values, destinations and associations,

receiving a request over the network, the request including the a product code and identifying a user, and

sending the value associated with the requested product code to at least one of the destinations based on the request, and

storing the requested product code and associated destination for tracking purposes.

28. The method of claims 1, 10, 26 or 27 wherein the product is a service.

29. A system in communication with a second computer via a network comprising:

data and instructions accessible to the system,

the data including records linking product codes to characteristics of a product,

a processor for executing the instructions,

the instructions including the steps of: retrieving the value of a characteristic in response to a request by the second computer for product information, the request including the product code and information relating to a third computer; sending the value to the second computer for provision to the third computer; and storing tracking information linking the information relating to the third computer with the product code in the request.

30. The system of claim 29 wherein the information relating to the third computer relates to the user of the third computer.

31. he system of claim 29 wherein the value is sent with information regarding how the value should be displayed by the second computer to the third computer.

32. system for providing product information over a network comprising:

means for associating product codes with the values of a characteristic,

means for associating product codes with destinations on the network such that a first product code is associated with a first destination and a second product code is associated with a different second destination, the first product code and second

product code further being associated with different characteristics of the same product,

means for storing the product codes, values, destinations and associations,

means for receiving a first request over the network, the request including the first product code and identifying a destination, and

means for sending the value associated with the first product code to the destination if the stored association indicates that the destination identified in the request is associated with the first product code.

33. The system of claims 29 or 32 wherein the product is a service.

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